(b) No, Sir. Data Entry Operators are engaged on contract for specific project only and they have not been regularised.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) The engagement is for specific project only. Hence question of regularisation does not arise.

Opening of post offices

1670. SHRI K. B. KRISHNA MURTHY : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state :

(a) the number of new post offices proposed to be opened during the year 2002-03;

(b) how many new post offices are proposed to be opened in Karnataka during the above period; and

(c) how many post offices are proposed to be computerised in Karnataka during the above period?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SANJAY PASWAN) : (a) 275 new post offices are proposed to be opened during 2002-03. Opening of new post offices is subject to the norms based justification and availability of requisite resources.

(b) Out of these 275 new post offices, 10 post offices are proposed to be opened in Karnataka during 2002-03.

(c) Depending upon completion of procedures and availability of funds, 8 (eight) offices will be computerised in Karnataka during 2002-03.

Demand for reduction in licence fee

1671. SHRI HARENDRA SINGH MALIK : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state :

(a) whether private cellular operators have recently, demanded reduction of licence fee burden and permission to install adequate spectrum for superior service at lower costs;

(b) if so, whether it is a fact that Indian cellular operators were offering the lowest tariffs in the world despite prohibitive regulatory costs which are highest in the world;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the action taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SANJAY PASWAN) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) on behalf of Cellular Operators have made the claim of offering the lowest tariffs for the Service. The licence fee being charged from Cellular Operators has been fixed after obtaining recommendations from Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI). At present, the Cellular Mobile Telephone Service Providers are required to pay licence fees as 12%, 10% and 8% of Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) for category 'A', 'B' & 'C' Service Areas respectively, apart from charges for use of wireless frequency spectrum.

(c) and (d) TRAI is responsible for fixation for tariffs for Telecom Services in India including Cellular Mobile Telephone Service (CMTS). As per the information provided by TRAI, at present, Cellular Operators in India have more than 300 tariff packages in the market. It is extremely difficult to compare cellular tariffs in India with those in other countries because of the large number of tariff packages and these vary significantly between developing and developed countries. Comparison is also rendered difficult because of varying exchange rates and differences in purchasing power across countries. However, the cellular mobile tariffs in India are among the low tariffs world-wide.

Electronic telephone exchanges

1672. PROF. M.M. AGARWAL : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state :

(a) the details of the electronic telephone exchanges set up in Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttaranchal and NER during the last three years;

(b) the details of the funds earmarked, disbursed and utilised so far for the said purpose during this period; and